

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for customizing a product surface, comprising the steps of:
providing one or more panels for attachment to a structural element of said
5 product;

providing an attachment means to affix the one or more panels to the
structural element of the product; and

applying said one or more panels to said structural element of said product
using said attachment means in a manner such that said one or more panels are
10 affixed independently of the exterior shape and dimensions of said product.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of said one or more panels
is decorative.

15 3. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of said one or more panels
is functional.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein said product surface being customized
is a vending machine surface.

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5. The method of claim 1, wherein said attachment mechanism is
selected from the group consisting of bolts, screws, nails, rivets, brackets, retaining
trim, magnetic fasteners, retaining clips and receptacles, captive fasteners, mating
fasteners, spring clips, cotter pin assemblies, ball and socket fasteners, ball stud and
25 retainer systems, "Christmas-tree" clips, clamps, reclosable fasteners, interlocking

fasteners, glues, cements, caulks, double-sided adhesives, transfer adhesives, structural adhesives, catalyzed adhesives, pressure-sensitive adhesives, heat-activated adhesives, putties, velcro, and static-cling systems.

5 6. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of applying said one or more panels further comprises the step of attaching said one or more panels as directed by an installation guide provided on at least one of said one or more panels.

 7. The method of claim 6, wherein said installation guide is selected from
10 the group consisting of indentations, outlines, and markers.

 8. A kit for altering an external appearance of a product, comprising:
 one or more panels;
 built-in installation guides illustrating the attachment of said one or more
15 panels to an exterior surface of said product; and
 attachment structures for affixing said panels to said exterior surface,
 wherein said panels and attachment structures allow the external appearance
of the product to be reversibly altered without causing damage to the exterior surface
of the product.

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 9. The kit according to claim 8, wherein said one or more panels are selected from the group consisting of decorative panels and functional panels.

 10. The kit according to claim 8, wherein said attachment structures are
25 selected from the group consisting of bolts, screws, nails, rivets, brackets, retaining

trim, magnetic fasteners, retaining clips and receptacles, captive fasteners, mating fasteners, spring clips, cotter pin assemblies, ball and socket fasteners, ball stud and retainer systems, "Christmas-tree" clips, clamps, reclosable fasteners, interlocking fasteners, glues, cements, caulks, double-sided adhesives, transfer adhesives, structural adhesives, catalyzed adhesives, pressure-sensitive adhesives, heat-activated adhesives, putties, velcro, and static-cling systems.

11. The kit according to claim 8, wherein said installation guides are selected from the group consisting of indentations in said one or more panels, outlines on said one or more panels, and markers placed on said one or more panels.

12. Apparatus for customizing an exterior surface of a vending machine, comprising:

one or more panels selected from the group consisting of graphic panels, decorative panels, and functional panels adapted for application to the exterior surface of said vending machine independent of the exterior shape and dimensions of said exterior surface.

13. A kit for altering an external appearance of a vending machine, comprising:

at least one panel;

built-in installation guides provided on said at least one panel illustrating how to attach said at least one panel to a chassis of said vending machine; and

attachment structures for affixing said at least one panel to said chassis,

wherein said panels and attachment structures allow the external appearance of the vending machine to be reversibly altered without causing damage to the underlying vending machine chassis.

5 14. The kit according to claim 13, wherein said at least one panel is selected from the group consisting of graphic panels and functional panels.

15 15. The kit according to claim 14, wherein said graphic panels provide an improved aesthetic appearance to said vending machine.

10 16. The kit according to claim 14, wherein said functional panels provide additional functionality to said vending machine.

15 17. The kit according to claim 13, wherein said built-in installation guides are selected from the group consisting of indentations in said one or more panels, outlines on said one or more panels, and markers placed on said one or more panels.

20 18. The kit according to claim 13, wherein said attachment structures are selected from the group consisting of bolts, screws, nails, rivets, brackets, retaining trim, magnetic fasteners, retaining clips and receptacles, captive fasteners, mating fasteners, spring clips, cotter pin assemblies, ball and socket fasteners, ball stud and retainer systems, "Christmas-tree" clips, clamps, reclosable fasteners, interlocking fasteners, glues, cements, caulks, double-sided adhesives, transfer adhesives,

structural adhesives, catalyzed adhesives, pressure-sensitive adhesives, heat-activated adhesives, putties, velcro, and static-cling systems.

19. A method for customizing a vending machine, comprising the steps of:

5 providing at least one panel selected from the group consisting of decorative panels and functional panels, for attachment to a chassis of said vending machine;

providing attachment means selected from the group consisting of bolts, screws, nails, rivets, brackets, retaining trim, magnetic fasteners, retaining clips and receptacles, captive fasteners, mating fasteners, spring clips, cotter pin assemblies, 10 ball and socket fasteners, ball stud and retainer systems, "Christmas-tree" clips, clamps, reclosable fasteners, interlocking fasteners, glues, cements, caulks, double-sided adhesives, transfer adhesives, structural adhesives, catalyzed adhesives, pressure-sensitive adhesives, heat-activated adhesives, putties, velcro, and static-cling systems; and

15 applying said at least one panel to said vending machine chassis using said attachment means in a manner such that said at least one panel is affixed independently of the exterior shape and dimensions of said chassis.

20 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the step of applying said at least one panel further comprises the step of attaching said at least one panel as directed by at least one installation guide provided on said at least one panel.